GALLERY 26

SUBJECT MATTER IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The battle line is drawn, as every artist worthy of the name knows, not between abstract art and representational art, but, as always, between quality and mediocrity. Recently there has been a great deal said and written about a "return to the image." In fact, many of the most important contemporary artists have never eliminated "the image." Others experimented for a time with abstract forms but returned to representation when they realized that their gifts were better suited to expression in art forms which were literary rather than purely formal.

Subject matter opens the way to interpretation (as does a novel or a play) while abstraction, like music, attempts to communicate felt experience directly. Some artists are temperamentally better suited for one or the other kind of creation. Other artists (de Kooning, Diebenkorn) seem able to move easily from one kind of expression to the other.

While many of the best painters and sculptors have been working for the past twenty years in an abstract idiom, contemporary art is by no means synonomous with abstraction. In demonstration of this point, the present exhibition presents a group of works by living painters and sculptors, each an important artist in his way, and all working with representational images. Some are Surrealists or related to Surrealism (Hare, Balthus, Giacometti), some are "romantic realists" (Stuempfig, Murch), some are related to expressionism or are semi-abstract (Marini, Kerkam, Callahan, Dubuffet), but all include recognizable subjects which are treated-or interpreted-in a particular way. And the difference between David Hare and David Smith, or between Balthus and Brooks is not nearly so great nor so important as it is between any of these artists and the innumerable mediocre or downright bad painters and sculptors who abound in this–as in every other–age.

All the paintings and sculptures in this exhibition are for sale. For information about prices inquire at the Information Desk.

BALTHUS (1908–) was born in France of Polish parents. He is related through the sculpturesque rendering of static figures to artists like Derain but the strange dream-like mood of his works suggests Surrealism.

"Le Spahi et son Cheval"
Oil on canvas, 1949.

"Fillette au Chat"
Oil on canvas, 1937.

Lent by the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York

KENNETH CALLAHAN (1906–) lives in Washington where he was born. In recent years he has become increasingly abstract, however, his figure paintings are probably his best known works.

"Judgement of Paris"
Oil on canvas, 1958.

Lent by the Maynard Walker Gallery, New York

JEAN DUBUFFET (1901–) gave up painting in the mid-1920's and became a successful wine merchant. He devoted himself entirely to art again only after the liberation of Paris in 1944. His approach has varied considerably, from the "brutal" figures of the late 40's to the lighter moods and more decorative treatment of the collages of the 1950's.

"Je Maintiendrai"
Oil on canvas, 1954.

"Formes et Deformes"
Oil on canvas, 1956.

Lent by the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI (1901–) though better known as a sculptor is also a painter of great importance. He was born in the Italian speaking part of Switzerland and studied in Italy and Paris as well as Geneva. He joined the Surrealists in 1929 and became their leading sculptor with figures and objects of strange dream-like intensity.

"Head on a Stele"
Bronze, 1958.

"Annette"
Oil on canvas, 1961.

Lent by the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York

DAVID HARE (1917–) was born and lives in New York, although he he spends much time in France. He began as a photographer and only did his first sculpture in 1942. During the war he worked with the Surrealists in New York. He has been influenced by both Giacometti and the surrealistic works of Picasso.

"Black Angel"
Bronze on stone base, 1960.

Lent by the Saidenberg Gallery, New York

EARL KERKAM (1893–) is an American painter who has long been recognized by other artists but has not had "the press" of some of the better known New York painters. His subjects are largely restricted to the human figure–particularly his own countenance. In style and flavor his art is French rather than American; he seems particularly close to Jacques Villon, although he points out that Villon is more "romantic."

"Head"
Oil on board, 1960.

"Head"
Oil on board, 1959.

Lent by World House Galleries, New York

"Self Portrait"
Oil on board, 1952

Lent by the B. C. Holland Gallery, Chicago

MARINO MARINI (1901–) is an Italian artist who is well known for sculptures and paintings of figures and horses which are stylized and expressionistic. The realistic portrait of Stravinsky, however, is a sensitive interpretation revealing great insight into character.

"Portrait of Stravinsky"
Bronze, 1950.

Lent by the Martha Jackson Gallery, New York

WALTER MURCH (1907–) was born in Toronto and lives in the United States. His simple still-lifes seem to be invested with significance and mood which cannot be described but can only be experienced before the paintings. He seems related to artists such as Chardin and in the twentieth century, de Chirico and Morandi.

"Stone, Wood, Metal"
Oil on canvas, 1956.

"The Helmet"
Oil on canvas, 1959.

Lent by the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York

WALTER STUEMPFIG (1914–) is an American painter living in Philadelphia. His very skillfully painted landscapes and still-lifes are quite romantic - even nostalgic - in mood.

"The River"
Oil on canvas, 1953.

"Piranesi"
Oil on canvas, 1961.

Lent by Durlacher Bros., New York